

Link to published letter, 7.4.16..

http://www.heraldscotland.com/opinion/14408527.It_is_within_Transport_Scotland_s_powers_to_resolve_train_cycle_problems/

-----Letter as sent...

Letters to the Editor, the Herald
6 April 2016

Dear Editor

Bike carriage on trains - where does the fault lie?

Several readers have blamed Abellio for the proposed worsening of bike carriage spaces and conditions on the West Highland and central Scotland lines.

However, the problem in fact originated with the Scottish Government and their agency, Transport Scotland, in their Franchise Agreement (FA) with Abellio, and their preceding 'Invitation to Tender' (ITT) - and it could now be solved by Transport Scotland.

The ITT and FA contain much that is good for cycle/rail integration, but, crucially, and as Spokes pointed out to the government several times, it was half-hearted on bike carriage. Transport Scotland appears fixated on maximising fixed seating, regardless of the flexibility needed to ensure that trains are fit for both peak and off-peak, for commuting and for leisure and tourism.

The ITT and FA merely requested a minimum of 2 bike spaces per train - regardless of current bike storage or of length of train. Thus, in proposing to cut bookable bike spaces from 6 to 2 on the West Highland tourist routes, or downgrade the type of Edinburgh-Glasgow bike storage (despite longer trains) Abellio is merely following the criteria in the FA.

Transport Scotland has the power to specify that current bike capacity should be maintained, and could do that now if it so wished, as it has to approve all new train configurations. We do understand that they have moved a little way, following your coverage and continuing pressure from the tourism industry, and are investigating at least a partial amelioration of the West Highland proposals. Ideally, Spokes would like to see a flexible space in every carriage, as is common in Europe, allowing more people to travel with bikes, prams and bulky luggage, particularly off-peak, and giving a bit more peak-hour standing space in crowded trains.

Finally, we cannot let Abellio off the hook completely, since their website on taking over the franchise, promised "Improved off peak cycle capacity on trains" and, for the scenic trains such as West Highlands, "More luggage, cycle and ski storage" - promises clearly not being kept if the present proposals go through unamended.

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